

Comments From Dan Rozanas, Alta High School, Canyons School District  
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I thank you for the opportunity to address this committee and its members on these important issues. I also appreciate the sustained efforts by the Legislature to work with educators (both union members and non-), the public, and the private sector as you plan for the future of Utah public education and implement ideas that will improve student achievement and outcomes. It is more than challenging to try to distill dissertations worth of questions/answers into a small handout, so I encourage you to contact me if you'd like more information, resources, or research concerning anything contained in this document.

### Elements Contributing To High Student Achievement

There's no single, silver/magic bullet to utilize because an enormous number of items contribute to student achievement. The following are some of the important factors that are either correlated with (predictive of) or have a cause/effect relationship with student achievement.

Factor	Description
<b>SES</b>	Socio-economic status is highly, positively correlated with student achievement. The negative risk factors associated with poverty, though possible to overcome, tend to predict more challenges for students academically and socially.
<b>Recommendation:</b> Improve our economy, decrease poverty, improve equity of opportunity, outcome, and access to resources, ameliorate the effects of poverty, etc.	
<b>Brain Development</b>	Everything related to learning occurs within the brain and through healthy brain development. Factors that improve brain development (especially prenatally through age two), including healthcare, nutrition, effective parenting, etc. are essential.
<b>Recommendation:</b> Improve access to, education about, and utilization of healthcare and nutritional factors (prenatally through childhood), access for everyone to parenting training (research based and focused on childhood/student health and learning), etc.	
<b>How To Learn</b>	When were you taught HOW to learn? For most people the answer is never. It's astonishing that we do not have a systematic, K-12 approach to teaching students how to learn. <u>It would be the equivalent of a business expecting its employees to successfully be able to make a product or render a service despite no one ever teaching them how.</u>
<b>Recommendation:</b> Either establish or oversee a systematic, K-12 program that teaches students how to learn (developmentally appropriate by age).	

<b>Time</b>	Numerous factors relate to the idea of not having enough time. High class sizes, a lack of personalized or individualized education, a curriculum and school schedule that values breadth over depth, numerous formative and summative assessments with no time to examine and utilize the results, etc.
<b>Recommendation:</b> Look to countries like Finland as an example. They have lower class sizes, fewer hours per day/year, fewer curriculum standards, fewer standardized tests, more time for educators to collaborate and plan, professionally develop, and utilize student data, and their student achievement level is near the top.	

  

<b>Effective Use Of Research From Psychology and Education</b>	There is a convergence of research on best practices in education to improve student learning and achievement. However, many in the general population seem to be unaware of it. Even some in the field of education do not utilize proven strategies. To improve student achievement everyone (students, parents, educators, administrators, and legislators) needs to be on the same page in promoting and implementing this research.
<b>Recommendation:</b> Become aware of, understand, promote, and implement educational practices that are supported by scientifically valid research. All legislation that impacts public education should respect and represent this awareness/knowledge.	

### Challenges As A Teacher

There are many challenges that face professional educators but, of course, I am unable to list and describe them all here. I will give a brief example to illustrate one of them.

**Feeling Overwhelmed** In a typical Utah classroom a high school teacher might be responsible for the academic and social welfare of 216 or more students (36+ per class). **To grade one written essay/paper for each of those students, giving only 5 minutes per paper—which is not enough time to give much useful feedback—translates to 18 straight hours of grading.** Which is on top of a full teaching schedule, trying to get to know my students and how I can support them, committee meetings, occasional professional development, lesson planning/revising, looking at other student assessments/data, communicating with parents, being a mentor to students or teachers, extra-curricular duties, entering and updating grades, supporting students who are having emotional/social problems, reading/learning more to improve as a professional, tutoring of students before and after school, paperwork, etc. It is physically impossible to do this job to the level I would like to.

### What Should The Legislature Do or Refrain From Doing To Promote Student Learning

I would ask the legislature to utilize scientifically valid research to make policy decisions for public education. Scientific research is either silent on or does not support grading schools, anti-union bills, performance pay, longer school days or years for all students, more standardized testing, etc. to improve achievement. Give educators the autonomy and resources to make professional judgments while holding us reasonably accountable. Have more dialogue with us and come visit us to see what we're doing. Please don't see educators (union or not) as an adversary or obstacle to improving education but rather as professional partners to be worked with. We all have the same goals for our students and educators would like to be respected, supported, and appreciated for the professionals that we are as we work together to educate our children.